

On the icons of Sinai and Raithou martyrs in Saint Catherine's monastery at Sinai, with an overview of the cult and iconography of these saints in East Christian art*

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The first part of the paper discusses the written testimonies about the history of the cult of the holy fathers of Sinai and Raithou at St. Catherine's monastery and the visual representations of these saints in East Christian art. The Sinai icons in question are then analysed in two ways. First, the choice of figures of the saints in the upper registers of the icons is considered. On the other hand, the iconography of the forty Sinai and Raithou martyrs is studied in greater detail. It is shown that representations of the celebrated holy monks were used to paint their "portraits".

Keywords: Sinai, Monastery of Saint Catherine, holy fathers of Sinai and Raithou, Byzantine art, icons, iconography

Two icons depicting the holy fathers of Sinai and Raithou, painted most probably in the early thirteenth century, are kept in Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai (figs. 1-2).¹ They are located in the monastery *katholikon*, in the *parekklesion* dedicated to these martyrs of the

faith. The central position in the upper register of the panel depicting the Sinai fathers is occupied by an image of the Deesis – representing Christ being approached by the Virgin and John the Baptist in a supplianting position. The composition of the Deesis includes another two figures on either side of the central image: representations of the apostolic *coryphoi* Peter and Paul, as well as the famed Sinaite *hegoumenos* John Climacus at the rear of the procession on the right and St. Paul of Latros (Ο | ΑΓΙΟΣ / ΠΑΥΛΟΣ) on the opposite side. Below this "extended Deesis" are the frontal standing figures of the forty monks of Sinai (+ Η ΑΓΙΗ ΠΑΤΕΡΕΣ / ΤΟΥ ΣΙΝΑ) arranged into four rows and holding crosses or (less commonly) *rotuli* in their hands. The uppermost section of the second icon contains a representation of the Virgin with Christ at the center, which is approached by the archangels Michael and Gabriel; it is flanked by another figure of John Climacus and that of John of Damascus. As in the first icon, the figures of the monk-martyrs are arranged into four rows of ten hieratic images each (+ Η ΑΓΙΗ ΠΑΤΕΡΕΣ / ΤΗΣ ΠΑΙΘΟΥ).

What attracted our attention to these two well-known but still insufficiently examined works of art are some of their very interesting iconographic features. Prior to their consideration, however, it seems useful to provide a brief overview of the cult and iconography of the holy fathers of Sinai and Raithou, as these hagiological and art-historical problems have yet to be adequately elucidated.

The martyrs of Sinai and Raithou. Hagiography, relics, iconography.

The story of the slaughter of the Sinai and Raithou martyrs has reached us via two late antique writings. The first is the Report (Διηγησις, *Relatio*) by the Egyptian monk Ammonius (BHG 1300).² The author – who happened to be on a pilgrimage to Mount Sinai at the

* A shorter version of the paper was read at the round table "Issues in Sinaiitic iconography" (convenors: M. Panagiotidou, M. Marković, N. Fyssas and D. Mourelatos) held as part of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine studies (Belgrade, 2016); cf. *Proceeding of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies Belgrade, 22-27 August 2016. Round tables*, ed. B. Krsmanović, Lj. Milanović, Belgrade 2016, 1341-1347 (<http://www.byzinstsasa.rs/srp/uploaded/PDF%20izdanja/round%20tables.pdf>). At this point I would like to express my special gratitude to Julia Gearhart, Director of the Visual Resources and Curator of the Image and Historic Collections of the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, who generously helped me with obtaining the photos of the icons from the Monastery of Saint Catherine.

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¹ Most authors were of the opinion that the icons were created in the early thirteenth century. Cf. Γ. Σωτηρίου, Μ. Σωτηρίου, *Εικόνες τής Μονής Σινά I*, Αθήνα 1956, πίν. 153-154; II, Αθήνα 1958, 134-135 (late twelfth or early thirteenth century); D. Mouriki, *Icons from the 12th to the 15th century*, in: *Sinai. Treasures of the monastery of Saint Catherine*, ed. K. A. Manafis, Athens 1990, 112, figs. 43-44; A. M. Lidorov, *Vizantijskie ikony Sinaia*, Moskva 1999, 28, 100, no. 30; Egeria. *Monuments of faith in the medieval Mediterranean*, ed. M. Kazakou, V. Skoulas, Athens 2008, 241-242, no. 36-37. For their dating to the twelfth century cf. G. R. Parpulov, *Mural and icon painting at Sinai in the thirteenth century*, in: *Approaching the Holy mountain. Art and liturgy at St Catherine's monastery in the Sinai*, ed. S. E. J. Gerstel, R. S. Nelson, Turnhout 2010, 386, cat. no. 135/1-2.

² For the Greek text cf. *Tō Μαρτυρολόγιον τοῦ Σινᾶ*, ed. Δ. Τσάμης, Θεσσαλονίκη 2003, 288-330. Ammonius's work was recently translated into English (D. F. Caner, *History and hagiography from the Late Antique Sinai*, Liverpool 2010, 141-171). The Aramaic, Syrian, Arabic and Georgian versions have also been preserved (cf. *ibid.*, 141).



Fig. 1. Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, Icon of the holy fathers of Sinai (by permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photograph courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria expeditions to Mount Sinai)

time – claims to have personally witnessed the slaughter of the Sinai monks at the hands of the barbarian tribe of Blemmyes,³ and that a survivor informed him on the very same day of the killings the Blemmyes had committed at Raithou. In fact, a detailed account of the second massacre makes up the bulk of his text. Ammonius's narrative is believed to have been written in the late fourth or early fifth century, but there are rather sound reasons to suggest that its final version was not compiled before the second half of the sixth century or even its last years.⁴

³ The inhabitants of the desert between the Nile and the Red Sea, in Upper Egypt. Cf. Blemmyes, in: ODB I, 296–297 (R. Bruce Hitchner, A. Kazhdan); L. Kirwan, *The early history of the Blemmyes*, in: idem, *Studies on the history of Late Antique and Christian Nubia*, Ashgate 2002, XII, 46–48.

⁴ Cf. P. Mayerson, *The Ammonius narrative: Bedouin and Blemmye attacks*, in: *Bible world. Essays in honour of Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. G. Rendsburg et al., New York 1980, 133–148; I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the fourth century*, Washington D. C. 1984, 297–319; P.-L. Gatier, *Les traditions et l'histoire du Sinaï du 4^e au 7^e siècle*, in: *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel*, ed. T. Fahd, Leiden 1989, 510–521; B. Flusin, *Ermitages et monastère: Le monachisme au Mont Sinaï à l'époque protobyzantine*, in: *Le Sinaï durant l'Antiquité et le Moyen Âge*, ed. C. Bonnet, D. Valbelle, Paris 1998, 136–137; T. Hainthaler, *Christliche Araber vor dem Islam. Verbreitung und konfessionelle Zugehörigkeit. Eine Hinführung*, Leuven–Paris–Dudley MA 2007, 43–47; Caner, *History and hagiography*, 51–63, 141–146; W.



Fig. 2. Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, Icon of the holy fathers of Raithou (by permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photograph courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria expeditions to Mount Sinai)

The other description of this event, Διήγημα (*Narrationes*) by monk Nilus (BHG 1301–1307),⁵ was long – and probably incorrectly – attributed to Nilus of Ancyra (†430) based on the Byzantine tradition and its stylistic similarities and thematic parallelisms with the works of this Christian author.⁶ The work in question is not uniform in genre and combines the traditions of late antique novels, hagiographic texts and descriptions of martyrdoms.⁷ The author narrates, at times very vividly and poignantly, the massacre of

D. Ward, *The mirage of the Saracen. Christians and Nomads in the Sinai peninsula in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley 2014, xvi–xvii, 92–110.

⁵ More recently, the text was published in several editions. Cf. *Nilus Ancyranus Narratio*, ed. F. Conca, Leipzig 1983; *Tō Mārtυrōlōyōn tōv Σινᾶ*, 354–452; *Die Erzählung des Pseudo-Neilos – ein spätantiken Märtyrroman*, ed. M. Link, München–Leipzig 2005 (including a German translation). For English and Russian translations cf. Caner, *History and hagiography* 73–135; D. E. Afionogenov, *Nila monashchestvuiushchego poved' ob ubienii monakhov na gore Sinaiskoi*, *Vestnik drevnei istorii* 2/225 (1998) 210–220; 3/226 (1998) 241–252.

⁶ On Nilus of Ancyra cf. *Neilos of Ankyra*, in: ODB II, 1450 (B. Baldwin, A. Kazhdan), including a bibliography.

⁷ On the distinctive characteristics of genre in Ammonius's and Pseudo-Nilus's works, which set them apart from other late antique writings dedicated to martyrs v. M. Detoraki, *Greek passions of the martyrs in Byzantium*, in: *The Ashgate research companion to Byzantine hagiography II. Genres and context*, ed. S. Efthymiadis, Ashgate 2014, 78–79.

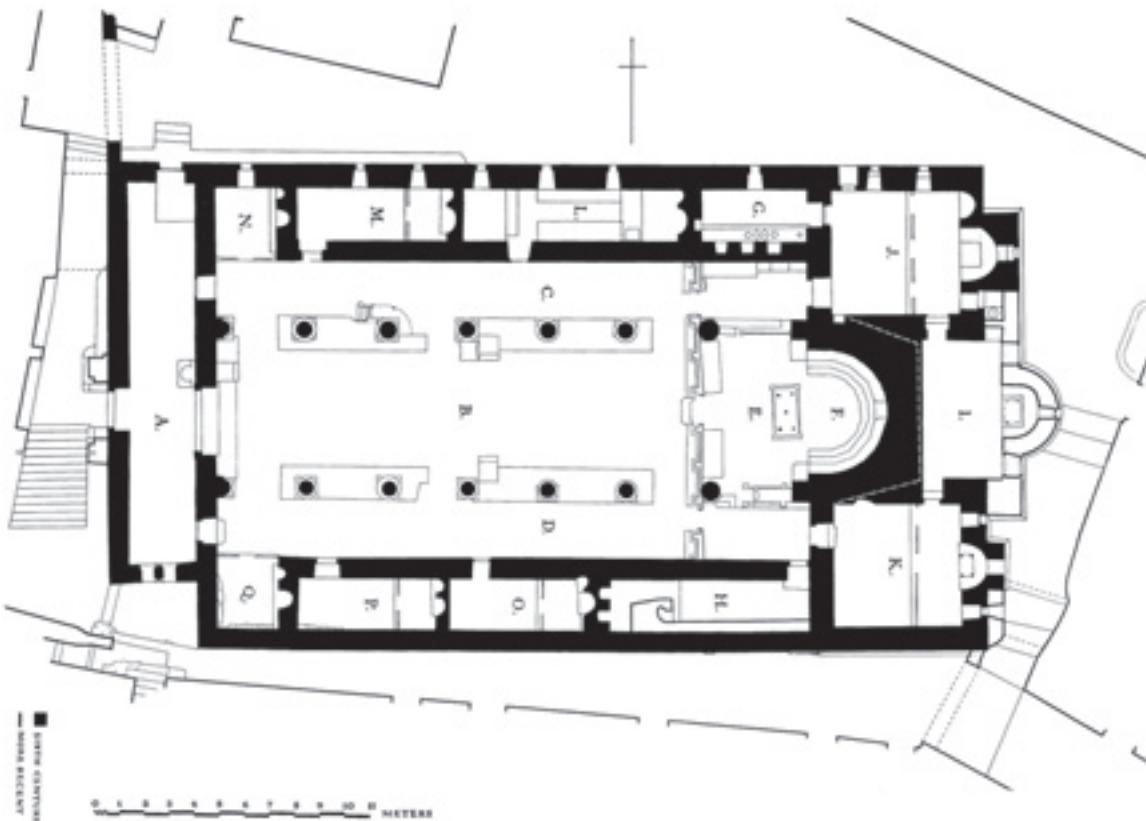


Fig. 3. Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, katholikon, ground plan
(after: Forsyth, *The monastery of St. Catherine*)

the Sinai monks by the Saracens, as well as the captivity of his son Theodosius, who was eventually saved. Pseudo-Nilus's work is impossible to date accurately and is generally believed to have been written in the period between the late fourth and the sixth century.⁸

Finally, there is the third, much younger and shorter written testimony. It has been preserved in the so-called "Imperial" Menologion for January from the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (No. 521), which was composed in the eleventh century. The note on the slaughter of the Sinai monks in this manuscript (BHG 1307D) is mostly based on the corresponding chapter in Pseudo-Nilus's text.⁹

In addition to these hagiographical writings, the cult of the Sinai and Raithou fathers is also evidenced by their relics. There is no doubt that the relics were deposited at the monastery in the early days of the veneration of the martyrs in question. However, we can only speculate if this occurred before or after the writing of Ammonius's and Nilus's works. Be that as it may, the existence of the relics at the Sinai mon-

astery¹⁰ before the tenth century is evidenced by an indirect but very reliable piece of evidence contained in the Synaxarium of Constantinople, dating from the same century, which reserves 14 January for the commemoration of their martyrdom (purportedly under Emperor Diocletian). According to a note in this text, one can conclude that the cult of the Sinai martyrs outgrew local boundaries and made its way to the imperial capital. Since the Synaxarium locates their relics at St. Paul's Church (originally St. Peter and Paul's), in the *Orphanotropheion* (orphanage) located at the acropolis of Constantinople, scholars believe that the translation of the relics from Sinai to Constantinople was ordered by Emperor Justin II (565–578), the founder of the church in question.¹¹

¹⁰ We must limit our discussion to the veneration of the cult of the saints in question at Sinai since the history of the Raithou monastery remains almost entirely unknown. Our knowledge of this monastic community is limited to a few notable personalities such as Daniel of Raithou, the author of the *Vita of St. John Climacus*, or Theodore of Raithou, a theologian from the early seventh century. Cf. *Raithou*, in: ODB III, 1770–1771 (L. S. B. MacCoul, N. Patterson Ševčenko).

¹¹ Delehaye, *Synaxarium*, col. 389–391. Cf. Gatier, *Les traditions*, 520–521; Caner, *History and hagiography*, 62. According to the *Chronicle of Theophanes*, Justin II built Sts. Peter and Paul's Church on the grounds of the *Orphanotropheion*, the endowment of Priest Zoticus, cf. *The chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern history*, AD 284–813, trans. C. Mango, Oxford 1997, 361–362. This imperial foundation was later referred to as St. Paul's Church, as is the case in the Synaxarium of Constantinople, cf. R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin. Première partie. Le Siège de Constantinople et le Patriarcat œcuménique III. Les églises et les monastères*, Paris 19692, 567–568; T. S. Miller, *The orphans of Byzantium. Child welfare in the Christian empire*, Washington D. C. 2003, 52–53, 177.

The hypothesis about the role of Justin II in the translation of the relics of the Sinai and Raithou holy fathers to Constantinople seems consistent with our knowledge of his general activities in this field. Namely, this nephew and successor of Justinian's had many valuable relics translated to Constantinople. Cf. H. A. Klein, *Sacred*

⁸ V. Christides, *Once again the "Narrations" of Nilus Sinaiticus*, *Byzantion* 43 (1973) 39–50; Gatier, *Les traditions*, 510–521; D. F. Caner, *Sinai pilgrimage and ascetic romance: Pseudo-Nilus's "Narrations" in context*, in: *Travel, communication and geography in Late Antiquity: sacred and profane*, ed. L. Ellis, F. L. Kidner, Ashgate 2004, 135–147; Caner, *History and hagiography*, 51–63, 73–83; Hainthaler, *Christliche Araber*, 43–47; Ward, *The mirage of the Saracen*, xvii–xix, 92–110.

⁹ F. Halkin, *Le mois de janvier du "Ménologe impérial" de Byzance*, *Analecta Bollandiana* 57 (1939) 234, no. 15 (=idem, *Le ménologe impérial de Baltimore*, Bruxelles 1985, 16); idem, *Les moines martyrs du Sinai dans le ménologe impérial*, in: *Mémorial André-Jean Festugière. Antiquité païenne et chrétienne*, ed. E. Lucchesi, H. D. Saffrey, Geneva 1984, 267–273; A. Constantiniades Hero, *An anonymous narrative of the martyrdom of the anchorites of Mount Sinai (BHG 1307D)*, in: *Byzantine religious culture. Studies in honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, ed. D. Sullivan, E. Fisher, S. Papaioannou, Leiden–Boston 2011, 411–420.



Fig. 4. *Menologion of Basill II, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Vatic. gr. 1613), fol. 316 (after: El Menologio de Basilio II)*

The veneration of the Sinai and Raithou martyrs' cult at St. Catherine's Monastery is even today evidenced by the easternmost lateral chapel located on the south flank of the main church and connected by a door to the central *Chapel of the Burning Bush*, which is situated behind the altar apse (fig. 3).¹² This "Chapel of the Holy Fathers" houses an undated marble inscription, which mentions the martyrdom of the "the equal-in-number Holy Fathers" who "lie in this place". Its contents, particularly the number "four (and) ten" (τῆς δ δεκάδος) which is found at the beginning, have proved difficult to interpret, and scholars have yet to reach a consensus on whether it indicates the number of slain monks (40) or the date of their slaughter (14 January).¹³ In addition, several authors are skeptical about the possibility that the inscription was always located at this spot; in other words, they remain unconvinced that the *parekklesion* was originally intended to serve as a shrine of the martyrs of Sinai and Raithou. Some scholars have even expressed doubts that their relics were ever housed in this lateral chapel.¹⁴

relics and imperial ceremonies at the Great palace of Constantinople, in: *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft*, ed. F. A. Bauer, *Byzas* 5 (2006) 87–88.

¹² G. H. Forsyth, *The monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai. The church and fortress of Justinian*, DOP 22 (1968) figs. 2, 18; G. H. Forsyth, K. Weitzmann, *The monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The church and fortress of Justinian*, Ann Arbor 1973, fig. B, pl. XCIX; M. Μυριανθέως-Κουφοπούλου, *Βυζαντινά και μεταβυζαντινά παρεκκλήσια της Μονής Σινά. Ιστορία και αρχιτεκτονική*, Αθήνα 2015 (doctoral dissertation, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) 77–82, Σχ. 61–69, Εικ. 83–112.

¹³ I. Ševčenko, *The early period of the Sinai monastery in the light of its inscriptions*, DOP 20 (1966) 258, 263; Forsyth, Weitzmann, *The monastery of Saint Catherine*, 20, pl. CII/D (I. Ševčenko); P. Mayerson, *An inscription in the monastery of St. Catherine and the martyr tradition in Sinai*, DOP 30 (1976) 375–379; Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, 316–319; Gatier, *Les traditions*, 518–519; Caner, *History and hagiography*, 52, 60–61; Ward, *The mirage of the Saracen*, 100–102.

¹⁴ Caner, *History and hagiography*, 52, 61.

However, the research of the cult of the Sinai and Raithou monks at St. Catherine's Monastery has not even come close to exhausting all available textual testimonies. Although admittedly scarce and sometimes unintelligible, they do provide a useful basis for understanding this problem.

First and foremost, the key testimonies are found in the Typikon of the Monastery of St. Catherine which was composed in 1214 by Simeon, the *hegoumenos* and archbishop of Sinai. The synaxarion part of the Typikon describes services performed on 14 January, the commemoration day of the holy martyrs of Sinai and Raithou. Of utmost importance is the fact that the text clearly connects this liturgical ritual to the Chapel of St. John the Baptist ("the Church of the Prodromos"), which houses the "honorable and holy relics of our holy fathers".¹⁵ Since other sources clearly indicate that it was the chapel south of the altar that was dedicated to St. John the Forerunner,¹⁶ this note in the monastery typikon should be treated as the earliest reliable evidence that the relics of the martyrs of

¹⁵ «Γίνεται δὲ καὶ ἡ ἐκτενή ἐν τῇ θήκῃ τῶν λαμπάδον ἐν τῷ ναῷ Προδρόμου, ἐν δὲ κατάκεινται τὰ τίμια καὶ ἄγια λείψανα τῶν ἀγίων πατέρων ἡμῶν...» Cf. A. Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rukopisei III*, Petrograd 1917, 412. The importance of this source for the history of the chapel was noted by Μυριανθέως-Κουφοπούλου, *Βυζαντινά και μεταβυζαντινά παρεκκλήσια*, 79.

¹⁶ This dedication is explicitly cited by some Western European pilgrims [cf. J. M. Braun, *St. Catherine's monastery church, Mount Sinai: literary sources from the fourth through the nineteenth centuries*, Michigan 1973 (doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan) 257, 316, 317, 318], as well as certain Greek and Russian visitors of the monastery in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Cf. *Vosem' grecheskikh opisanii Sviatyykh mest XIV–XVI vv.*, ed. A. I. Papadopoulos-Keramevs, P. V. Bezobrazov, PPS 56 (1903) 18 (Greek text), 159 (Russian translation); *Khozhdenie sviashchennoinika Varsanofiiā ko sviatomu gradu Ierusalimu v 1456 i 1461–1462 gg.*, ed. S. O. Dolgov, PPS 45 (1896) 20. For the English translation cf. *Three East Slavic pilgrims at Sinai*, ed. G. Parpulov, in: *Approaching the Holy mountain*, 483.



Fig. 5. Menologion of Basill II, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana (Vatic. gr. 1613), fol. 317 (after: *El Menologio de Basilio II*)

Sinai and Raithou were venerated in the very same chapel that is today named after them.

The second group of sources includes accounts written by the monastery's visitors. Among the many pilgrims who visited the Sinai monastery in the middle ages, only a few have left references to the relics of the Sinai and Raithou martyrs in their descriptions. As a rule, once in the *katholikon*, most pious travelers focused their attention on the aforementioned Chapel of the Burning Bush, and from the second half of the twelfth century onwards also on the sarcophagus containing the relics of St. Catherine of Alexandria, which was probably placed in the nave of the main church around that time.¹⁷ As far as we have been able to establish, the relics of the Sinai and Raithou martyrs are first mentioned by a Greek author (the so-called *Anonymous Allati*), whose text was probably written between 1250 and 1350. This anonymous writer mentions the "chapels (Παρακλήσια) of holy abbas which house the relics of those slain at Si-

nai and Raithou" and goes on to count another six chapels in the *katholikon* without offering any information about their dedications.¹⁸ The Byzantine author seems to be referring to two separate chapels. Unfortunately, the text offers no clues about their location within the main church.

The hypothesis that the monastery used to have two chapels dedicated to the Sinai and Raithou martyrs is also supported by a much younger text, written in 1576. This is a short description included in an account of a pilgrimage to the holy places of the East by Theodosios Zygomas (1544–1607), the learned *proto-notarios* under Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople (1572–1595), addressed to the distinguished Protestant theologian Stephan Gerlach (1546–1612), another notable writer of travel literature.¹⁹ According to this text, the main church of the monastery was flanked on its

¹⁷ Notable studies about pilgrims' descriptions of the Sinai monastery include: L. Eckenstein, *A history of Sinai*, London 1921, 155–172; Braun, *St. Catherine's monastery church*; A. Külzer, *Peregrinatio graeca in Terram Sanctam. Studien zu Pilgerführern und Reisebeschreibungen über Syrien, Palästina und den Sinai aus byzantinischer und metabyzantinischer Zeit*, Frankfurt am Mein 1994, passim; A. Drandaki, *The Sinai monastery from the 12th to the 15th century*, in: *Pilgrimage to Sinai. Treasures from the Holy monastery of Saint Catherine*, ed. eadem, Athens 2004, 26–40, passim; eadem, *Through pilgrims' eyes. Mt Sinai in pilgrim narratives of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries*, ΔΧΑΕ 27 (2006) 491–504; D. Jacoby, *Christian pilgrimage to Sinai until the late fifteenth century*, in: *Holy image, hallowed ground. Icons from Sinai*, ed. R. S. Nelson, K. M. Collins, Los Angeles 2006, 79–93; G. Foukaneli, *Pilgrimage to south Sinai. Biblical traditions and the veneration of saints in the environment of the Sinai monastic community*, in: *Routes of faith in the Medieval Mediterranean. History, monuments, people, pilgrimage perspectives*, ed. E. Hadjityphonos, Thessalonike 2008, 341–347.

¹⁸ PG CXXXIII, col. 984. For an English translation, which we slightly modified in the lines cited in the body text ("abbas" instead of "abbots") v. D. Pringle, *The churches of the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem. A Corpus II, L-Z (Excluding Tyre)*, Cambridge 1998, 53, including the dating of the writings to the period after Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem in 1187. For the dating cited in the body text (1250–1350) cf. idem, *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, 1187–1291*, London – New York 2012, 58, 381–392, which also includes an English translation. The *pereklesion* is not mentioned in the younger and more detailed description by pilgrim Thietmar (1217), who was the first to record the presence of St. Catherine's relics in the *katholikon*. Cf. *Mag. Thietmari Peregrinatio, ad fidem codicis Hamburgensis*, ed. J. C. M. Laurent, Hamburg 1857, 41–47; Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader kingdom*, 52–53.

¹⁹ On Theodosios Zygomas and his work cf. S. Runciman, *The Great Church in captivity*, Cambridge 1968, 247–248, 256; Külzer, *Peregrinatio graeca*, 29–31, 351–355 (with a German translation); A. Rhoby, *The friendship between Martin Crusius and Theodosios Zygomas*, *Medioevo graeco* 5 (2005) 249–267; idem, *Theodosios Zygomas and his report on a journey to the Aegean and the coast of Asia Minor*,



Fig. 6. Staro Nagoričino, Menologion, Holy fathers of Sinai (after: Mijović, Menolog)

south side by, among other buildings, a chapel dedicated to the Sinai and Raithou fathers; a chapel dedicated to forty martyrs (probably the Holy Forty of Sebaste); as well as another chapel dedicated to “another forty martyrs, slain for following Jesus by those Arabs who called themselves Blemmyes, and whose relics lie there.”²⁰ This description, however, seems unreliable. Presumably, the author misunderstood the dedications of the chapels he mentions, since it was not “another forty” who were slain by the Blemmyes, but precisely the monks of Raithou, to whom he claims that the first chapel was dedicated together with the martyrs of Sinai. Hence, this source cannot be treated as a trustworthy testimony suggesting that the veneration of the Sinai and Raithou monks was tied to more than one *parekklesion* in the sixteenth century. In addition, the credibility of this description is further damaged because it seems not to have been based on Zygomas’ personal visit to the monastery, but on an older text used by the author.²¹

In accordance with the description from the typikon considered above, all other known sixteenth century sources suggest that it was only the chapel located south of the *bema* that was dedicated to the veneration of the local martyrs, as is still the case today, i. e. that this chapel housed their relics. For example, Vasily Poznyakov, a Moscow merchant originally from Suzdal, who spent twenty days on Mount Sinai as a member of a delegation sent by Tsar Ivan the Terrible, left an unambiguous testimony: in 1558, at the time of the Russian’s visit to the monastery, the relics of the Holy Fathers of Sinai and Raithou were located in the south lateral chapel, which was connected by a door to the Chapel of the Burning Bush. Having described the chapel, he adds: “When you exit this chapel, straight into the wall are inserted the relics of the holy fa-

thers killed at Sinai and Raithou”²² Furthermore, several Greek and Russian sixteenth century travel writers regularly mention the relics of these martyrs and note that the chapel was actually dedicated to them, and not, as before, to St. John the Baptist.²³

Besides the aforementioned sources, a chapel dedicated to the Holy Fathers is also mentioned in a text written in verse by Paisios Hagiapostolites, the future Metropolitan of Rhodes (1597–1603), in 1577–1592. Paisios’s report is relevant for our topic because it offers the most detailed description of the *parekklesion*. Like his predeces-

²² *Three East Slavic pilgrims*, 489. For the Russian original of this travel account cf. *Khozhdenie kuptsa Vasiliia Poznakova po sviatym mestam Vostoka*, ed. Kh. M. Loparev, PPS 18 (1887) 1–63.

²³ A text by a sixteenth century Greek author suggests that the main church (the context makes it clear that the author is referring to its southern side) is flanked by the “temple of the abbas slain at Sinai and Raithou”, which houses “their relics” which “perform miracles”. Cf. *Vosem’ grecheskikh opisanii*, 36 (Greek original), 175 (Russian translation). The same dedication of the lateral chapel “right of the Holy Bush” is described in another Greek *proskynetarion* from the same century. Cf. *ibid.*, 100 (Greek text), 229 (Russian translation). The chapel is also mentioned in a Russian description dating from the sixteenth century and very recently published by I. V. Fedorova in: „*Povest’ o sviatoi gore Sinaiskoi*“ – *maloizvestnyi pamiatnik vostochnoslavianskoj palomnicheskoi literatury*, Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoj literatury 62 (2014) 455, 473, n. 18 („I ottudu ko vratom iuzhnyim moshchi sviatykh otets v rakakh, izbienii ot nechestivykh aravliyan, vzhigaiut zhe nad nimi tri kandila“). Finally, the existence of a chapel dedicated to the Holy Fathers of Sinai and Raithou at this site was also recorded by Trifon Korobeynikov, a Moscow pilgrim and merchant, in his travel account of 1593. Cf. *Khozhdenie Trifona Korobeinikova 1593–1594 gg.*, ed. Kh. M. Loparev, PPS 27 (1889) 63. Korobeynikov’s description was taken into account by Μυριανθέως-Κουφοπούλου, *Βυζαντινά και μεταβυζαντινά παρεκκλήσια*, 81.

On the other hand, the southern chapel appears in Western European sources for the first time in 1732 with the dedication to the “Seventy (sic!) martyrs”, and as the chapel of the “Holy Fathers” in a text dating from 1738. Cf. Braun, *St. Catherine’s monastery*, 257, 317, 318. Therefore, a Western source dating from 1498, which still mentions the chapel of St. John the Baptist, cannot be used as an argument to conclude that by that time the dedication had not been changed, as stated in: Μυριανθέως-Κουφοπούλου, *Βυζαντινά και μεταβυζαντινά παρεκκλήσια*, 80.

in: *H Ελλάδα των νησιών από τη Φραγκοκρατία ως σήμερα II*, ed. A. Αργυρίου, Αθήνα 2004, 103–113.

²⁰ *Vosem’ grecheskikh opisanii*, 52 (Greek text), 191 (Russian translation).

²¹ On this v. Rhoby, *Theodosios Zygomas*, 109.

sors, the author briefly mentions the martyrs' relics, and then provides an extremely valuable piece of information, stating that the chapel houses a marble inscription which, to his understanding, refers to the indiction and the year.²⁴ It seems feasible to conclude that the inscription in question is the very same one that is still found in the chapel and whose contents, much like many a modern researcher, Paisios was unable to decipher accurately. Hence, his text should be treated as the earliest possible testimony about the existence of this marble slab at the very site where it is still located. In addition, this source offers another fact which is of utmost importance for the problem discussed here. Namely, the author informs the reader that above this inscription stands an "icon with their images, worshipped by the faithful".²⁵ With understandable caution, the cited lines could perhaps be considered the first mention of the icons that are the subject of our research, as well as evidence which suggests that they were placed above the relics of the saints they depicted. In view of the fact that the Sinai monastery carefully preserved its works of art throughout the centuries, it is highly unlikely that Paisios was describing another icon that might have been lost in the meantime. Of course, this hypothesis stands only if we are correct in our assumption that the author mentions a single icon (and not a pair of icons) because the icons of the Sinai and Raithou fathers were placed side by side as a diptych of sorts.

Of certain significance for the study of the cult of Sinai and Raithou Holy Fathers are also their visual representations.²⁶ When it comes to the local reflection of their veneration in art, then, in addition to the icons that are the main subject of our study, it is necessary to mention another icon from the treasury of the Monastery of Saint Catherine. In the upper register of the icon in question, also painted in the thirteenth century, there is a composition of the Great Deesis, and in the lower four rows there are standing, frontal figures of saints.²⁷ On the right side of the second zone from below, opposite the figures of nine famous holy monks (St. John Climacus, Sabbas, Euthymius, Ephraem, Theodore of Stoudius, Pachomius, Arsenius, Paul of Thebes, Anthony), the same number of figures of the fathers of Sinai and Raithou is represented.

²⁴ Παΐσιον Ἀγιαποστολίτου Μητροπολίτου Ρόδου, Ἰστορία των αγίους όρους Σινά καὶ τῶν περιχώρων αὐτοῦ, ed. A. Παπαδόπουλος-Κεραμεύς, Γ. Σ. Δεστούνης, PPS 35 (1891) 28 (Greek original), 111 (Russian translation). Cf. Külzer, *Peregrinatio graeca*, 31–33, 355–395 (with German translation); idem, *Die Sinaibeschreibung des Paisios Hagiapostolites, Metropolit von Rhodos* (1577/92), in: *Beschreibung der Welt. Zur Poetik der Reise- und Länderberichte*, ed. R. Schulz, Amsterdam 2000, 205–218; Μυριανθέως-Κουφοπούλου, *Βυχαντινά και μεταβυχαντινά παρεκκλήσια*, 81.

²⁵ Παΐσιον Ἀγιαποστολίτου Μητροπολίτου Ρόδου, 28 (Greek original), 111 (Russian translation).

²⁶ Besides the martyrs of Sinai and Raithou, the author of one of their *vita* was also accorded a fitting place in Byzantine iconography. "Nilus of Sinai" and his son Theodosius are celebrated as saints in the Orthodox Church (12 November) and were sometimes depicted in Byzantine art. Cf. e.g. Ντ. Μουρίκη, *Οι τοιχογραφίες του παρεκκλησίου της Μονής του Ιωάννου του Θεολόγου στην Πλάται*, ΔΧΑΕ 14 (1987–1988) 214–216; S. Tomeković, *Les saints ermites et moines dans la peinture murale byzantine*, Paris 2011, 34, 47.

²⁷ Σωτηρίου, *Εικόνες τῆς Μονῆς Σινά* I, πάν. 221; II, 194–195, where the icon is dated to the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century. For the opinion that the icon was created in the thirteenth century, which in our view is more justified, cf. Parpulov, *Mural and icon painting at Sinai*, 389, no. XIII.67.



Fig. 7. Sucevița, Menologion, Martyrdom of the fathers of Sinai and Raithou (photo: P. Palamar)

Apart from the Monastery of Saint Catherine, the veneration of the martyrs of Sinai and Raithou has not left a deep mark in Byzantine art as a whole. When it comes to other East Christian areas, almost all other extant representations of these saints are found in *Menologia* illustrated in manuscripts and icons, or painted on the walls of churches.²⁸

The richly illuminated Menologion of Basil II (Vatican. gr. 1613) includes three miniatures depicting the martyrdom of the abbas of Sinai and Raithou. The Holy Fathers of Sinai are featured in this book twice. The first miniature (fol. 315) depicts the slaughter of a group of monks on a rocky background, while another folio (fol. 316) depicts the remaining fallen and the miraculous appearance of fire in the monastery which drove out the Saracens (fig. 4). The image depicting the beheading of the Raithou monks (fol. 317) features an unusually gruesome detail: the image of a monk with his head split in two (fig. 5). There is no doubt that the monk in question is Paul, the *hegoumenos* of Raithou, whose gory death was described by a survivor in Ammonius's text.²⁹ The slaug-

²⁸ The "Painter's Manual" by Dionysius of Fourni also recommends depicting the Sinai and Raithou Holy Fathers only in menologia. Cf. P. Hetherington, *The "Painter's Manual" of Dionysius of Fourni*, London 1974, 75.

²⁹ *El Menologio de Basilio II*, Madrid 2005, 315–317. Cf. N. Patterson Ševčenko, *The Walters "Imperial" menologion*, The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery 51 (1993) 51, n. 38, who notes that the miniature, painted over in the eighteenth century, depicts the slain monk



Fig. 8. Moscow, State Russian Museum, Icon of the holy fathers of Sinai and Raithou
(photo: Wikimedia Commons)

ter of the Raithou fathers is also depicted in the aforementioned Baltimore menologion (fol. 92v), again featuring

with two heads due to the artist's misunderstanding of the image. However, the fact that the illustration in question depicts the beheading of the abbot of Raithou described in Ammonius's text has escaped the attention of the author. Cf. Caner, *History and hagiography*, 164 ("His holy head was split in half and fell on his shoulders, one part off this side, and one part off that"). The hypothesis that monk Nilus, hidden behind the basilica, witnesses the scene (cf. Patterson Ševčenko, *The Walters "Imperial" menologion*, 51) is unfounded. There can be no doubt that this figure actually represents the Raithou monk who told the story of the slaughter to Ammonius after having witnessed the slaughter hidden behind some palm fronds. Cf. Caner, *History and hagiography*, 164.

an image of the abbot's split head,³⁰ as well as on a miniature in the Sinai Menologion for January (No. 512) dating from 1055–1056 (fol. 2v).³¹ The joint martyrdom of both groups is depicted in a Menologion kept at the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice (gr. Z 585, fol. 60v),³² in the Theodore

³⁰ Patterson Ševčenko, *The Walters "Imperial" menologion*, 51, fig. 28.

³¹ N. Ševčenko, *Illustrated manuscripts of the Metaphrastian menologion*, Chicago–London 1990, 23, figs. 1B6, 1B8; K. Weitzmann, G. Galavaris, *The monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The illuminated Greek manuscripts I. From the ninth to the twelfth century*, Princeton 1990, 71, fig. 198, color pl. 15.

³² Ševčenko, *Illustrated manuscripts*, 45, fig. 1E5.



Fig. 9. Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, Icon of the holy fathers of Sinai, upper register (by permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photograph courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria expeditions to Mount Sinai)

Psalter from the British Library in London (Add. 19.352, fol. 111r), which was made in 1066 in Constantinople,³³ and on a heavily damaged miniature in the Menologion of Demetrios Palaiologos, dating from the mid fourteenth century and kept at the Bodleian Library in Oxford (MS Gr. th. f. fol. 25r).³⁴ Expectedly, the slaughter of the Sinai fathers is also depicted on an icon-hexaptych from the eleventh century at St. Catherine's Monastery.³⁵ As regards monumental art, there are two extant examples in Serbian medieval churches frescoed in the fourteenth century: the calendar illustrations in Staro Nagoričino, which feature only the Sinai martyrs on frontal portraits and busts (fig. 6),³⁶ and in Dečani, which houses a heavily damaged image of the monks' slaughter.³⁷ Like in Staro Nagoričino, the Greco-Georgian Menologion from the late fifteenth century kept at the Russian National Library (Раз. О. I. 58, fol. 96) does not depict the slaughter itself but instead shows a group of martyrs, this time standing and holding crosses in their hands.³⁸

The creation of calendar illustrations of the martyrs from the Sinai Peninsula was continued in the post-Byzantine period. A depiction of the slaughter of the Sinai fathers is also found in the exonarthex of the St. Nicholas Church at the Philantropinon Monastery near Ioannina (1560). Interestingly, this *Menologion*, although it features many bloody scenes of martyrdom, does not depict the actual beheading of the members of the monastic com-

³³ S. Der Nersessian, *L'illustration des psautiers grecs du Moyen Âge II*. Londres, Add. 19.352, Paris 1970, 43, pl. 67, fig. 183. Above the scene of the slaughter are depicted two standing monks praying to Christ Emmanuel.

³⁴ I. Hutter, *Corpus der byzantinischen Miniaturenhandschriften II*. Oxford Bodleian library II, Stuttgart 1978, 14, fig. 45.

³⁵ G. Galavaris, *An eleventh century hexaptych of the Saint-Catherine's monastery at Mount Sinai*, Venice–Athens 2009, 79, pl. 158. The other, rather numerous calendar icons at St. Catherine's monastery have yet to be thoroughly examined. It is to be expected that they will reveal more representations of the Holy Fathers of Sinai and Raithou.

³⁶ P. Mijović, *Menolog. Istorisko-umetnička istraživanja*, Beograd 1973, 271, sl. 54; B. Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, Beograd 1993, 83.

³⁷ V. R. Petković, Đ. Bošković, *Manastir Dečani II*, Beograd 1941, T. 108; S. Kesić-Ristić, D. Vojvodić, *Menolog*, in: *Zidno slikarstvo manastira Dečana. Građa i studije*, ed. V. J. Đurić, Beograd 1995, 394.

³⁸ L. M. Evseeva, *Afonskaiā kniga obraztsov XV veka*, Moskva 1998, 269, no. 114.

munity, but only their corpses.³⁹ The *Menologion* in the refectory of the Great Lavra Monastery on Mount Athos depicts both martyr groups (sixteenth century).⁴⁰ Particularly notable among the post-Byzantine examples is the calendar illustration in the Moldavian Sucevița Monastery from the same century. This fresco reveals a tendency to portray the “monastic city”, while the monks’ torturers have obviously been modernized and are pictured wearing distinctive Turkish turbans. The Oriental ambience is further enhanced by the representation of camels in the foreground of the composition (fig. 7).⁴¹

Finally, the cult of the martyrs of Sinai and Raithou has also left a mark in the Russian artistic tradition. The dead bodies of the slain ascetics resting against a rock in front of an image of the Sinai monastery are depicted in the Stroganov Artist's Handbook (late sixteenth – early seventeenth century)⁴² and on the calendar icon for the month of January at the Church Archaeological Museum of the Moscow Theological Academy (MTA) dating from the same period.⁴³ Particularly noteworthy

³⁹ *Monasteries of the island of Ioannina. Paintings*, ed. M. Garidis, A. Palioras, Ioannina 1993, 219, no. 51, fig. 259; M. Αχεμάστου Ποταμίου, *Οι τοιχογραφίες της Μονής των Φιλανθρωπηνών στο Νησί των Ιωαννίνων*, Αθήνα 2004, 179.

⁴⁰ N. Τούτος, Γ. Φουστέρης, *Ευρετήριον της μνημειακής ζωγραφικής του Αγίου Όρους 10th – 17th αιώνας*, Αθήνα 2010, 92, no. 236. For a review of representations of the Sinai and Raithou martyrs within *Menologia* found in Greek post-Byzantine churches cf. Αρχιμ. Σ. Κουκιάρης, *Μηνολόγια και Μαρτυρολόγια στην μνημειακή ζωγραφική του ελλαδικού χώρου*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2019, 54, no. 170, 76, no. 133, 104, no. 84, 138, no. 70, 154, no. 93, 169, no. 72, 185, no. 81, 202, no. 56, 207, no. 3, 222, no. 136, 251, no. 139, 256, no. 53, 271, no. 31, 356, no. 38.

⁴¹ E. Cincheza-Buculei, *Pictura pronaosului bisericii mănăstirii Sucevița*, Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei. Artă plastică, serie nouă 3 (47) (2013) 190, no. 89, fig. 36, Pl. II, no. 89. The martyrs in question are also depicted at the Voroneț Monastery, but this representation has not been reproduced. Cf. W. Milkowicz, *Zwei Fresco-Kalender in den Bukowiner Klosterkirchen Woronetz und Suczawitsa aus dem 16. Jahrhundert*, Mittheilungen der K. K. Central-Commission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst und historischen Denkmale 24 (1898) 15–16.

⁴² *Stroganovskii ikonopisnyi licevoi podlinik*, Moskva 1869, illustration for 14 January.

⁴³ A reproduction of this icon is available on the museum's website: <http://acmus.ru/collection/icons/index.php?page=19>. An icon for the month of January kept at the State Historical Museum in Moscow and painted in the middle of the fifteenth century, depicts St. Theodosius of Sinai, with the legend stating that 14 January is dedicated to the mem-



Fig. 10. Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, Icon of the holy fathers of Sinai, a. St Paul of Latros, b. detail, c. detail (by permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photograph courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria expeditions to Mount Sinai)

among the Russian examples is a seventeenth century icon painted by Master Pervusha, a member of the so-called Stroganov icon-painting school, now kept in The State Russian Museum, Moscow (fig. 8). Actually, besides the icons from St. Catherine's Monastery, this is the only stand-alone icon of the monks of Sinai and Raithou known to us. In the compositional and iconographic sense, this depiction is very complex and exceptionally narrative and was painted in the manner of historical compositions traditionally found in Russian illustrated chronicles. In addition to the slaughter of the *abbas*, the icon extensively depicts the battle between the Blemmyes and the citizens of Pharan, who came to the aid of the Raithou brotherhood.⁴⁴

ory of “Father Theodosius and the saints slain at Sinai”. Cf. *1000-letie russkoj khudozhestvennoj kul'tury*, ed. A. V. Ryndina, Moskva 1998, 351, no. 129; I. A. Shalina, A. G. Sergeev, *Kompleks ikon-minej iz sobranija F. A. Kalikina: voprosy stilia, ikonografii i atributov*, in: *Stranitsy otechestvennogo iskusstva*, ed. A. A. Rudakova, Sankt-Peterburg 2018, 26, n. 36. There are certainly more representations of the Holy Fathers of Sinai and Raithou in Russian calendar icons than mentioned here. These icons, however, have yet to be adequately published and examined.

⁴⁴ T. Vilinbakhova, *Stroganovskaiā ikona*, Sankt-Peterburg 2005, 85, ill. 86, 87. An unusual piece of information concerning the relics of the Sinai and Raithou martyrs has been preserved in the Russian tradition. Archive sources from the nineteenth century state that their ashes, together with those of the Nicomedian martyrs, were added to the wax used to coat the wooden icon of Theotokos of Blachernae (of the Hodegetria type), which was sent from Constantinople in 1653 as a gift to Emperor Aleksey Mikhailovich (1629–1676): cf. *Vlakhernskaiā ikona Bozhieī materi*, in: *Pravoslavnaiā entsiklopediia* 9, Moskva 2005, 120 (I. M. Sokolova). Cf. also eadem, *Ikona “Bogomater’ Vlakhernskaiā iz Uspenskogo sobora Moskovskogo Kremlia*,

The icons of the Holy Fathers of Sinai and Raithou: the figures in the upper registers

Let us return to the Sinai icons, beginning with a brief consideration of the iconographic characteristics of the images in the uppermost sections of the two panels.

The image of the “extended Deesis” – as the succinct iconographic formula for expressing the Glory of God, the soteriological-eschatological aspect of the economy of salvation and the idea of saintly intercession⁴⁵ – is very fitting to the top section of an icon depicting a group of martyrs (figs. 1, 9). However, the choice of the saints approaching Christ and the figures of the Mother of God and John the Baptist – the triad of figures which conventionally make up the Deesis in its basic form – requires an explanation. The figures of Sts. Peter and St. Paul are often positioned on either side of the central image in this type of composition. In the more elaborate version of this iconographic subject, they were joined by the figures of other apostles and these compositions of the “Great Deesis” began appearing on the epistles of altar screens.⁴⁶

in: *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo. Issledovaniia i atributii*, Sankt Peterburg 1997, 413–426.

⁴⁵ For the meaning of the Deesis and the older literature on the subject cf. A. Cutler, *Under the sign of the Deesis: on the question of representativeness in Medieval art*, DOP 41 (1987) 145–154.

⁴⁶ Cf. e.g. K. Weitzmann, *Icon programs of the 12th and 13th centuries at Sinai*, ΔXAE 4/12 (1984) 79–86; *The glory of Byzantium. Art and culture of the Middle Byzantine era A. D. 843–1261*, ed. H. C. Evans, W. D. Wixom, New York 1997, no. 9, 43; I. Stoufi-Poulimenou, *A Byzantine architrave with a Deesis from the monastery of Saint Nicholas at Pikerni, Arcadia (Greece)*, JÖB 61 (2011) 185–193. The possibility

The presence of the figure of St. John Climacus as the most renowned *hegoumenos* of Sinai is easily understandable.⁴⁷ His clothing, however, deserves a short commentary. The author of the *Ladder* is pictured here with a *koukoulion* on his head, unlike in most of his other representations.⁴⁸ However, it has been noted that there are indeed corresponding – albeit rare – analogies: John Climacus is pictured with a *koukoulion* on a miniature in the *Sacra Parallela* (*Par. Gr. 923*) and on a Komnenian icon of the *Deesis* at the Sinai monastery.⁴⁹ The holy *hegoumenos* of Sinai was depicted in the same iconographic form on a thirteenth century fresco in the chapel of St. James at the monastery *katholikon*⁵⁰ as well as on another Sinai icon dated to the fifteenth century.⁵¹

While the appearance of John Climacus requires little interpretative effort, the figure on the opposite side of the “extended *Deesis*” does – the image of St. Paul of Latros (figs. 9-10a).⁵² This notable hermit (†15 December 955)⁵³ was the founder of the Monastery of the Mother of God *του Στύλου* on Mount Latros, a monastic community on Lake Heracleia in Caria, near the ancient Greek city of Miletus.⁵⁴ Besides the figure on the Sinai icon, only a handful of medieval depictions of St. Paul of Latros has

that the Sinai icon features representations of St. Peter and Paul because the martyrs’ relics were located at the Constantinopolitan church dedicated to this apostolic pair should not be entirely excluded. However, we should bear in mind the aforementioned fact that this church was dedicated solely to St. Paul at the time of the icon’s creation, rendering this hypothesis less plausible. Cf. n. 11. *supra*.

⁴⁷ Cf. Lidov, *Vizantijskie ikony*, 100.

⁴⁸ On the iconography of John Climacus, cf. especially D. Mouriki, *Four thirteenth-century Sinai icons by the painter Peter*, in: *Studenica i vizantijska umetnost oko 1200. godine*, ed. V. Korać, Beograd 1988, 341; Tomeković, *Les saints ermites*, 47.

⁴⁹ K. Weitzmann, *The miniatures of the Sacra Parallela*, Princeton 1979, 245–246, fig. 712; Σωτηρίου, *Εικόνες τής Μονής Σινά I*, πίν. 83; Mouriki, *Four thirteenth-century Sinai icons*, 341, n. 60.

⁵⁰ Μ. Χατζηδάκης, *Τοιχογραφίες στη Μονή της Αγίας Αικατερίνας στο Σινά*, ΔΧΑΕ 6 (1970–1972) 219, πίν. 80/2. For the dating of these paintings to the thirteenth century cf. Parpulov, *Mural and icon painting*, 346–347, with a bibliography.

⁵¹ *Icon with saint John Klimax*, in: *Byzantium. Faith and power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. Evans, New York 2004, 383–384, no. 239 (N. Patterson Ševčenko); *Pilgrimage to Sinai*, 192–193, no. 39; *Holy image, hallowed ground*, 243, no. 47.

⁵² There is no doubt that the saint in question is indeed St. Paul of Latros, as suggested by all scholars who have studied this icon (cf. n. 1 *supra*), although only the name of the saint has been preserved and not his geographic epithet. Unlike all other holy monks named Paul who have been depicted in Byzantine art (Paul the Simple, Paul of Thebes, Paul of Xeropotamou, cf. Tomeković, *Les saints ermites*, 41–42, 52, 55, 243–244), the appearance of the holy monk on the Sinai icon completely corresponds to that of the anchorite of Latros. On his iconography cf. *infra*. True, one should not forget that the abbot of Raithou was called Paul at the time of his martyrdom. Such an identification, however, is countered by the iconographic factors cited above, as well as the fact that St. Paul is painted on the icon of the martyrs of Sinai, not Raithou.

⁵³ Delehaye, *Synaxarium*, cols. 307–312 (*Synaxaria Selecta*); BHG II, 185–186; *Paul of Latros*, in: ODB III, 1608 (A. Kazhdan).

⁵⁴ On the monasteries of Latros cf. especially *Der Latmos*, ed. T. Wiegand, Berlin 1913; R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l’Empire Byzantin II: Les églises et les monastères des grands centres Byzantins*, Paris 1975, 217–240, 441–54; A. Kirby, Z. Mercangöz, *The monasteries of Mt Latros and their architectural development*, in: *Work and worship at the Theotokos Evergetis*, ed. M. Mullet, A. Kirby, Belfast 1997, 51–77; E. Ράγια, Λάτρος. Ένα άγνωστο μοναστικό κέντρο στη δυτική Μικρά Ασία, με λεπτομερή σχολιασμό των εγγράφων των αρχείου της μονής Θεοτόκου του Στύλου, Θεσσαλονίκη 2006; *Das Chartular des Paulos Klosters am Berge Latros*, ed. C. Gastgeber, Wien 2015.



Fig. 11. Latros, Monastery of the Mother of God tou Stilou, Cave of St. Paul of Latros, St Paul of Latros approaching the Virgin with Christ, copy (after: Wulff, *Die Malereien der Asketenhöhlen des Latmos*)

survived. His oldest representations are found on the frescoes painted on the walls of the cave outside the walls of his monastery. The first of these closely resembles the figure on the Sinai icon both formally and iconographically. This depiction is situated in the conch of the altar apse and shows St. Paul as an older man with a high forehead and a white, relatively short beard split into several strands approaching the figure of the Virgin in supplication. Unfortunately the representation of his counterpart on the other side has been destroyed (fig. 11). The north wall of the cave features a representation of the Dormition of Paul.⁵⁵ All other preserved images of this saint were created much later, in the fourteenth century. He is depicted in the churches of Athos – Protaton⁵⁶ and Hilan-

⁵⁵ O. Wulff, *Die Malereien der Asketenhöhlen des Latmos*, in: *Der Latmos*, 203–205, 206–208, taf. II, III/1, V/1, abb. 123; Ράγια, Λάτρος, 102–104. In the cited work, O. Wulff dated the frescoes in St. Paul’s cave around 1100, while G. Schiemenz, on the basis of some iconographic features, came to the conclusion that they were painted in the thirteenth century: cf. G. Schiemenz, *Die Malereien der Paulus-Höhle auf dem Latmos*, Pantheon 29 (1971) 46–53. Cf. also E. A. Vinogradova, *Monumental’naia zhivopis’ Nikeiskoi imperii: granicy i etapy razvitiia*, in: *Aktual’nye problemy teorii i istorii iskusstva 9*, ed. A. V. Zakharova, S. V. Mal’ceva, E. I. Staniukovich-Denisova, Moskva – Sankt Peterburg 2019, 288–289, n. 3, with a summary of the opinions of other authors.

⁵⁶ V. J. Djurić, *Les conceptions hagiortiques dans la peinture du Protaton*, HZ 8 (1991) 54; Τούτος, Φουστέρης, *Ευρετήριον*, 56, no. 360; Πρωτάτο ΙΙ. Η συντήρηση των τοιχογραφιών Ι, ed. I. Kavonidης, Πολύγυρος 2015, 297, εικ. 287.



Fig. 12. Dečani, St Paul of Latros (photo: Blago Fund)

dar (repainted in the nineteenth century)⁵⁷ – and in four monuments in medieval Serbia: the Church of the Virgin Hodegetria at the Patriarchate of Peć,⁵⁸ Dečani (fig. 12),⁵⁹ Lesnovo⁶⁰ and Treskavac.⁶¹ In these fourteenth century depictions, the facial features of the hermit of Latros do resemble those of the image in his foundation, but there is a marked difference in his clothing. In Protaton, Peć and Dečani he is dressed like a desert hermit, wearing a fur robe and an *analavos* over it, while the artist of Lesnovo also added a cloak.⁶²

Why was Paul of Latros chosen to be depicted on the icon with the forty fathers of Sinai? Although this question has not been given adequate attention, some possible answers have been suggested. Alexei M. Lidov has noted the very interesting fact that the *Vita* of Paul of Latros mentions that he had particularly venerated St.

⁵⁷ M. Marković, *Prvobitni živopis glavne manastirske crkve*, in: *Manastir Hilandar*, ed. G. Subotić, Beograd 1998, 232; Τούτος, Φουστέρης, *Ευρετήριον*, 187, no. 61.

⁵⁸ S. Tomeković, *Monaška tradicija u zadužbinama i spisima arhiepiskopa Danila II*, in: *Arhiepiskop Danilo II i njegovo doba*, ed. V. J. Đurić, Beograd 1991, 427, sl. 6; A. Gavrilović, *Crkva Bogorodice Odigitrije u Pećkoj patrijaršiji*, Beograd 2018, 187, 231, no. 134, 252, sl. 101.

⁵⁹ B. Todić, M. Čanak-Medić, *The Dečani Monastery*, Belgrade 2013, 427, 500, fig. 417.

⁶⁰ S. Gabelić, *Manastir Lesnovo. Istorija i slikarstvo*, Beograd 1998, 127, sl. 57.

⁶¹ M. Gligorijević-Maksimović, *Slikarstvo XIV veka u manastiru Treskavcu*, ZRVI 42 (2005) 106, sl. 23; S. Smolčić Makuljević, *Manastir Treskavac*, Beograd 2019, 210, sl. 56.

⁶² The aforementioned example from Treskavac differs from the usual iconography of St. Paul of Latros. In this monastery he is depicted with a *koukoulion*, wearing a robe and a cloak.

Catherine.⁶³ In view of the fact that St. Catherine's cult was becoming more prominent at the Sinai monastery perhaps precisely at the time of the icon's creation (if it was indeed painted in the early thirteenth century), this piece of information is certainly significant.⁶⁴ However, there seem to be other, just as indicative lines in the *Vita* of St. Paul of Latros that may help us explain his appearance on this icon. Namely, the eighth chapter of his *vita* mentions a slaughter of monks at Sinai and Raithou. The hagiographer relates that the monks of Sinai and Raithou – as many as three hundred – found refuge in this monastic community after having fled from the Saracens. At the end of his dramatic account about the refugees from the Sinai Peninsula, the author notes that there are reliable written testimonies which confirm the tale.⁶⁵ The fact that the *vita* of the most renowned hermit of Latros preserved a testimony about the persecution of the monks of Sinai and Raithou could – together with his deep veneration for the patron saint of the Sinai monastery – have been a strong enough reason for his appearance on our icon.

And yet, the connection between the two Sinai icons and Latros might not have been merely symbolic and associated with the figure of St. Paul. Namely, the link to this monastic center in Asia Minor is also indicated by certain characteristics of style. Georgios and Maria Sotiriou have argued that the icon depicting the Sinai fathers stylistically resembles the Deesis icon with the four Great Feasts from the Sinai collection.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the authors of the first catalogue of the Sinai icon collection have noted that this fragment – which is actually a part of the epistyle later named the “Three master-beam” by Kurt Weitzmann⁶⁷ – closely resembles the wall paintings in the Kelivaron Monastery (present-day Yediler) on Latros, which were initially dated to the first half of the thirteenth century.⁶⁸

⁶³ Lidov, *Vizantijskie ikony*, 100. For the relevant place in the *vita* cf. H. Delehaye, *Monumenta Latrensis Hagiographica*, in: *Der Latmos*, 127.

⁶⁴ The relics of St. Catherine were probably translated to the basilica of Transfiguration in the second half of the twelfth century. The earliest evidence of practicing her cult in the *katholikon* has been preserved in the text of the monastery *typikon* (1214), in which *hegoumenos* Simeon describes rituals performed above the sarcophagus of St. Catherine on her commemoration day (24 November). Cf. Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rukopisei*, 411. Since the beginning of the next century, St. Catherine gradually replaced the Mother of God as the monastery's patron saint and the change was made official in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. On St. Catherine's cult on Mount Sinai cf. N. Patterson Ševčenko, *St Catherine of Alexandria and Mount Sinai*, in: *Ritual and art. Byzantine essays for Christopher Walter*, ed. P. Armstrong, London 2006, 129–143; Drandaki, *The Sinai monastery*, 30 et passim; N. Patterson Ševčenko, *The monastery of Mount Sinai and the cult of St Catherine*, in: *Byzantium. Faith and power (1261–1557). Perspectives on late Byzantine art and culture*, ed. S. T. Brooks, New York – New Haven – London 2007, 118–137 (=eadem, *The celebration of the saints in Byzantine art and liturgy*, Ashgate 2013, XVII).

⁶⁵ Delehaye, *Monumenta Latrensis Hagiographica*, 109–110. Cf. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique* II, 229; Παγια, Λάτρος, 28–36, passim.

⁶⁶ Σωτηρίου, *Εικόνες τής Μονής Σινά* II, 134. On this epistyle cf. *ibid.*, I, εικ. 112–116, II, 111–112; Lidov, *Vizantijskie ikony*, 82, cat. no. 21; *Sinai. Treasures of the monastery*, fig. 31–33; *Templon beam with the Deesis and feast scenes*, in: *The glory of Byzantium*, 377, 379, cat. no. 248 (A. Weyl Carr); Parpulov, *Mural and icon painting*, 386, cat. no. 150. 3.

⁶⁷ Weitzmann, *Icons programs*, 77–80.

⁶⁸ Σωτηρίου, *Εικόνες τής Μονής Σινά* II, 134. The frescoes from the Kelivaron Monastery were published in Wulff, *Die Malereien der Asketenhöhlen*, 222–227, while the most recent study on them appeared in: J. Prolović, *Die Wandmalereien des Klosters Yediler am Latmos*, in: *Wiener Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik. Beiträge zum Sym-*



Fig. 13. Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, Icon of the holy fathers of Raithou, middle upper register (by permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photograph courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria expeditions to Mount Sinai)

In view of these similarities in style, could one entertain the thought that the icon of the Holy Fathers of Sinai and Raithou was painted on Mount Sinai by an artist from Asia Minor⁶⁹ (i.e. from the Empire of Nicaea, if the dating to the thirteenth century is correct)? Although this question requires a more detailed and comparative

stylistic analysis, we would like to mention the recent research conducted by Maria Panagiotidi, which suggests that some masters from Nicaea were indeed responsible for the creation of some of the most representative wall and icon paintings at Sinai in the thirteenth century.⁷⁰

Furthermore, are there grounds to consider the possibility that the icon was not originally painted at Sinai but

posium vierzig Jahre Institut für Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik der Universität Wien im Gedenken an Herbert Hunger (Wien, 4.–7. Dezember 2002), ed. W. Hörandner, J. Köder, M. A. Stassinopoulou, Wien 2004, 372–386. Besides the first half of the thirteenth century, these frescoes have been dated to the first decade of the same century (circa 1200) or to the late twelfth century. Cf. *ibid.*, 386, n. 22, including a bibliography.

⁶⁹ For such an assumption cf. Σωτηρίου, Εικόνες τῆς Μονής Σινά II, 135.

⁷⁰ M. Panayotidi, *Some observations on thirteenth-century Sinai icons and Bojana Frescoes (1259)*, in: *Bojanskata Črkvina meždu Iztoka i Zapada u izkustvoto na khristiānskata Evropa*, ed. B. Penkova, Sofiā 2011, 216–225; eadem, *Thirteenth-century icons and frescoes at St. Catherine's monastery on mount Sinai. Some observations*, in: *Orient et Occident méditerranéens au XIII^e siècle. Les programmes picturaux*, ed. F. Joubert, J.-P. Caillet, Paris 2012, 87–102.



Fig. 14. Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, Icon of the holy fathers of Sinai, detail (by permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photograph courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria expeditions to Mount Sinai)

that it was brought there from Latros? In addition to the aforementioned stylistic characteristics of the icon, some of its other features also seem to suggest this possibility. For example, particularly striking is the artist's familiarity with St. Paul's iconography – the remarkable similarity of his representation on the Sinai icon to that in Latros cave church; in addition, this saint is positioned on the left, hierarchically superior side of the extended Deesis, which is certainly significant. In other words, the reason behind the presence of the Latros hermit could have been the will of the donator and not the veneration of this saint at the Sinai monastery. Of course, we can do no more here than to merely indicate the possibility that the icon of the Holy Fathers of Sinai and Raithou had originated from Latros, to be confirmed or refuted in future studies.

As we have already noted, the central position in the top section of the icon depicting the Raithou fathers is occupied by a frontal standing figure of the Virgin with Christ, of the so-called Blachernitissa type,⁷¹ with the stooping figures of the two most prominent archangels beside it (figs. 2, 13). The Mother of God is here depicted as the Virgin Orans with a medallion bust of Christ Emmanuel in front of her chest. The placement of this representation at the top of the icon is of course understandable: in

the twelfth and thirteenth century, the monastery was still dedicated to the Mother of God. In fact, this representation seems to have corresponded to the same dedication in the case of another attribute of the Virgin: the Burning Bush. As noted by Doula Mouriki, this iconographic type is sometimes included in the illustrations of the biblical episode of the Burning Bush.⁷² Hence, one may cautiously assume that – although this epithet does not feature on the icon of the Raithou fathers⁷³ – this work also depicts a variant of the Virgin of the Bush.⁷⁴

The presence of the image of John Climacus on the left is almost self-explanatory, as is his depiction on the first panel. The same goes for the figure of his counterpart, St. John of Damascus, on the right. There can be no doubt that the famous theologian was depicted on the icon as a great venerator of the Mother of God and the author of many hymnographic compositions dedicated to her. Since the twelfth century, John of Damascus was often pictured beside the Dormition of the Virgin as the author of a canon dedicated to this great feast.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Mouriki, *Four thirteenth-century Sinai icons*, 336.

⁷² A. Lidov's claim (*Vizantijskie ikony*, 100) that such an inscription accompanies the depiction of the Theotokos is inaccurate.

⁷³ Mouriki, *Four thirteenth-century Sinai icons*, 336, n. 19. On the younger, iconographically more complex Sinai depictions of the Virgin of the Bush v. esp. Drandaki, *Through pilgrim's eyes*, 499–501, figs. 5–6; K. M. Larison, *Mount Sinai and the monastery of St. Catherine: place and space in pilgrimage art*, Chicago 2016 (doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago).

⁷⁴ Cf. e.g. S. Radojčić, *Besede Jovana Damaskina i freske Uspenja Bogorodičinog u crkvama kralja Milutina*, in: idem, *Uzori i dela starih srpskih umetnika*, Beograd 1975, 181–193; A. Grabar, *Les images des poètes et des illustrations dans leurs œuvres et dans la peinture Byzantine tardive*, Zograf 10 (1979) 13–14; G. Babić, *Kraljeva crkva u Studenici*, Beograd 1987, 166; E. Bakalova, *Hymnography and iconog-*

⁷¹ For the most recent comment on this iconographic type v. B. V. Pentcheva, *Icons and power. The Mother of God in Byzantium*, University Park 2006, 146–161, including a bibliography. We ourselves have considered the images of the Virgin with the bust of Christ Child in a medallion when discussing a fresco from the altar apse of the *katholikon* of Studenica monastery (1208/1209). This representation is related to the example on the Sinai icon in the fact that the Mother of God is depicted standing in front of the throne, and not sitting on it, as is usual. Cf. M. Živković, *Najstarije zidno slikarstvo Bogorodičine crkve u Studenici i njegova obnova u XVI veku*, Beograd 2019 (doctoral dissertation, University of Belgrade) 306–319.

Picturing an ideal monastic community: the “portraits” of the martyr monks

Finally, we can turn our attention to the depictions of the holy fathers of Sinai and Raithou. One of their most striking features is the fact that none of the monks' figures has an inscription that might help us identify them. This means that the artist did not deem it necessary to use the several names mentioned in the writings of Ammonius and Pseudo-Nilus, as well as in the Baltimore Menologion. Alexei M. Lidov has noticed that all images of the monks on the icons have distinctive, very well executed and convincing portrait features although the painter probably had no model to rely on, i.e. no iconographic template for painting all eighty faces of the Sinai and Raithou fathers. He has concluded that “by the sheer power of his imagination and familiarity with iconography, the artist of Sinai created eighty unique portraits of the holy martyrs”.⁷⁶

One can fully agree with the cited observation. It will suffice to compare the monks' portraits on the Sinai icons with those in the aforementioned menologia – it is very obvious that the artist took great care to create fully individualized physiognomies and not to repeat any of the eighty faces. While some of the Sinai and Raithou martyrs depicted in the Menologion of Basil II also have individualized physiognomies, there is still a remarkable difference in regard to the results achieved on the Sinai icons. A comparison with other calendar depictions such as the examples from Staro Nagoričino and the Greco-Georgian Menologion, which also show an effort to at least partially individualize their “portraits”, will yield a similar conclusion. However, the results in both cases were only slightly better than stereotypical group depictions. Only the convincing and individualized portraits of nine fathers of Sinai and Raithou on the icon of the Great Deesis with saints are to some extent comparable to the images depicted on the two icons that are the main object of our attention.

In comparison with some other interesting group depictions in East Christian iconography, the Sinai icons display a high level of originality in regard to the distinctiveness of the depicted physiognomies. The successful characterization of the martyrs’ “portraits” on the Sinai icons is rivaled only by the most accomplished depictions of another group of notable martyrs, which is equal in number to the Sinai and Raithou groups: the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. This is evidenced by their frontal group portrait in the menologion from the University Library of Messina (eleventh century, *San Salvatore* 27, fol. 190v),⁷⁷ a miniature in the Moscow Imperial Menologion for February and March from the same century [State Historical Museum, *Vlad. 376 (Syn. gr. 183)*, fol. 179r],⁷⁸ an exceptionally well-executed thirteenth century icon kept at the Svaneti Museum in Mestia (Georgia)⁷⁹ and the well-

raphy: images of hymnographers in the mural art of XII–XIII c. in Bulgaria, in: *Ritual and art*, 268–272.

⁷⁶ Lidov, *Vizantijskie ikony*, 100.

⁷⁷ Ševčenko, *Illustrated manuscripts*, 77, figs. 2D2–2D3.

⁷⁸ D. K. Trenev, N. D. Popov, *Miniatuřy grecheskogo menologija XI v. № 183 Moskovskoi Sinodal'noi biblioteki*, Moskva 1911, 8, T. 36; *Mount Athos treasures in Russia. Tenth to seventeenth centuries*, ed. B. L. Fonkich, G. V. Popov, L. M. Evseeva, Moscow 2004, 125, 129, cat. no. II. 6.

⁷⁹ G. Alibegašvili, A. Voljskaja, *Gruzijske ikone*, in: K. Vajcman et al., *Ikone*, Beograd 1981, 90, 113; T. Velmans, *Une icone au Musée de*

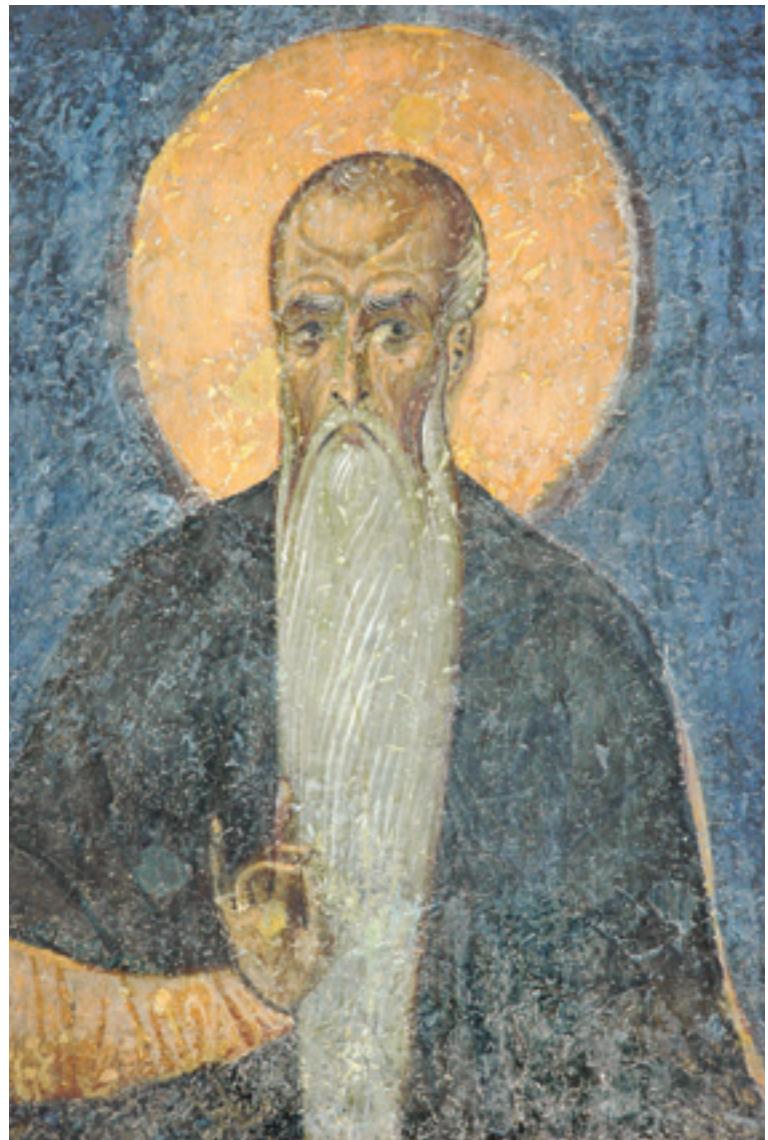


Fig. 15. Nerezi, St Euthimius the Great (photo: G. Fousteris)

known and also artistically accomplished fourteenth century icon from the Dumbarton Oaks collection.⁸⁰

In addition to the similarities in number and (to some extent) the persuasiveness of the “portraits”, the representations of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste are relevant for the Sinai icons due to another formal reason. Along with the representations of the fathers of Sinai and Raithou on the icon of Great Deesis and saints from the Monastery of Saint Catherine, some representations of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste can help us explain the appearance of frontal martyr portraits. Namely, besides the scene of martyrdom,⁸¹ these saints have been depicted in Byzantine art as a group of frontal, hieratic images. Unfortunately, besides the said miniature from Messina,

Mestia et la theme des Quarante martyrs en Géorgie, Zograf 14 (1983) 40–51; eadem, *La périphérie orientale du monde byzantin*, in: *Le grand livre des icônes*, ed. eadem, Paris 2002, 106, fig. 86.

⁸⁰ O. Demus, *Two Palaeologan mosaic icons in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, DOP 14 (1960) 101–102, fig. 6; *Portable mosaic icon with the Forty martyrs of Sebasteia*, in: *Byzantium. Faith and power*, 224–225, cat. no. 133 (S. A. Boyd).

⁸¹ In addition to the works of T. Velmans and O. Demus (cf. n. 79–90 supra), on the formal-iconographic characteristics of this type of image v. also H. Maguire, *Art and eloquence in Byzantium*, Princeton 1981, 36–42; D. Pavlović, *Kult i ikonografija četrdesetorice sevastijskih mučenika u Srbiji XIII veka*, Niš i Vizantija 7 (2009) 293–304.



Fig. 16. Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, Icon of the holy fathers of Sinai, detail (by permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photograph courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria expeditions to Mount Sinai)



Fig. 17. Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, Icon of the holy fathers of Sinai, detail (by permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photograph courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria expeditions to Mount Sinai)

only fragments of both examples that provide evidence of this have survived to this day. These examples are two standing ivory figures, the work of a tenth century Constantinopolitan master, which were once probably parts of the epistyle in the altar screen of a chapel dedicated to the Holy Forty of Sebaste, and a few preserved frescos in

the side aisles of the Church of Panagia Acheiropoietos in Thessaloniki (thirteenth century).⁸²

⁸² Α. Ξυγγόπουλος, *Αι τοιχογραφίαι των Αγιων Τεσσαράκοντα εις την Αχειρόπιτον της Θεσσαλονίκης*, Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς (1961) 6–30; K. Weitzmann, *An ivory plaque with two of the Forty martyrs of Sebaste in the Glencairn museum*, Bryan Athyn, PA, in: *Ευφρόσυνον*.

Although useful, this comparison with the depictions of the Sebaste martyrs is still insufficient to explain the painting process of the Sinai icons. How was the richness of the “portrait” features of the two icons from St. Catherine’s Monastery actually achieved? To at least partially answer this question, we must return to Alexei Lidov’s remark, who in addition to “imagination” mentions a certain “familiarity with iconography” of the painter. We believe that this remark could be further elaborated. First of all, careful observation of the monks’ faces on both icons leads to the conclusion that suitable templates had been used in their designing. Some of them correspond to a great extent (and sometimes fully) to the images of notable holy monks of the Orthodox East, whose “portrait features” were fully formulated and standardized by the time of the icon’s creation.⁸³ Although this cannot be said of all representations, it does apply to a number of images of the monks of Sinai and Raithou. Due to the limited space we have on our disposal, we will focus on a few characteristic examples – the images for which we are almost certain that they were painted after the model of the “portraits” of famous monks venerated in the Orthodox Church. In other words, the images in question are those which resemble the depictions of certain notable monks so heavily that – hypothetically, if they had been preserved individually – researchers would be tempted to identify them as those saints.

For example, one of the depictions on the icon of the Sinai fathers obviously resembles the physiognomy (εἰκονισμός)⁸⁴ of one the pioneers of Palestinian eremitic monasticism – Euthymius the Great. The figure in question is the third on the right in the top row (figs. 1, 14). This notable holy hermit was usually depicted as a balding old man with a very long and pointed beard, which is mentioned in his vita.⁸⁵ Good comparative examples which seem to confirm the assumption that in this case the artist used images of Euthymius the Great as his model are found on the walls of the churches of St. Panteleimon in Nerezi (1164) (fig. 15) and the Holy Anargyroi in Kastoria (late twelfth century).⁸⁶ The striking features of the

Αφιέρωμα στον Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη II, ed. E. Κυπραιού, Ντ. Ζαφειρόπούλου, Αθήνα 1992, 704–712, pls. 381, 383.

⁸³ On the shaping of the “portrait” characteristics of holy monks in East Christian art cf. S. Tomeković, *Le “portrait” dans l’art byzantin: Exemple d’effigies de moines du Ménologe de Basile II à Dečani*, in: *Dečani i vizantijska umetnost sredinom XIV veka*, ed. V. J. Đurić, Beograd 1989, 121–136; eadem, *Les saints ermites*, 97 sqq. For a more general survey of saints’ “portraits” in Byzantine art cf. H. Maguire, *Icons of their bodies. Saints and their images in Byzantium*, Princeton 1996; K. Marsengill, *Portraits and icons. Between reality and spirituality in Byzantine art*, Turnhout 2013.

⁸⁴ On this term, as the formula for a brief description of physical characteristics in the context of saints’ depictions in Byzantium cf. G. Dagron, *Holy image and likeness*, DOP 45 (1991) 25 sqq; G. Frank, *The memory of the eyes. Pilgrims to living saints in Christian Late Antiquity*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 2000, 134–170.

⁸⁵ *Kyrillos von Skythopolis*, ed. E. Schwartz, Leipzig 1939, 59. A brief description of St. Euthymius’s physical appearance is given in the Synaxarion of Constantinople (cf. Delehaye, *Synaxarium*, col. 405). Cf. Tomeković, *Les saints ermites*, 21–23; Maguire, *Icons of their bodies*, 24–25; M. Detoraki, *Portraits de saints dans le Synaxaire de Constantinople*, EEBΣ 53 (2007–2009) 224.

⁸⁶ I. Sinkević, *The church of St. Panteleimon et Nerezi. Architecture, programme, patronage*, Wiesbaden 2000, 61, fig. LI, 52; S. Pelekanidis, M. Hatzidakis, *Kastoria*, Athens 1985, 46, fig. 25.

Palestinian hermit were used twice more: slightly altering his portrait features, the artist painted the fourth monk on the left in the second row from the bottom, depicting him with dark hair instead of white; and the second monk on the right in the second row from the top, who has both dark hair and a dark beard.

The “portrait” characteristics of one of the greats of Egyptian asceticism – St. Anthony – also seem to have been considered.⁸⁷ His figure with a distinctive *koukoulion* on his head and a mid-length beard corresponds to the fourth monk on the left in the same row (figs. 1, 16).

If we continue the geographic classification of famous hermits whose physiognomies are easily recognized in the group representation of the Sinai monks, the next would be one of the most remarkable figures of the distinctive Syrian ascetic tradition: the authoritative hymnographer and theologian Ephrem the Syrian. His appearance with its characteristic *koukoulion* and a very short, sparse beard seems to have been used as the template for the monk depicted second from the left in the third row from the top (figs. 1, 17).⁸⁸

While painting the icons of the Sinai and Raithou fathers, the artist tried to include faces of different ages. Besides the seasoned elderly hermits, his depictions include middle-aged men and even a few young beardless ones (fig. 1) – perhaps relying on hagiographic texts which mention young monks of Sinai and Raithou, separately describing some of their suffering.⁸⁹ The figures of these younger martyrs in some cases strongly resemble the physiognomy of a very distinctive Constantinopolitan “Holy Fool” – St. John Kalivitis.⁹⁰

Furthermore, it seems that the painter had no qualms about adapting some of the monks’ faces to resemble the appearance of notable bishops, as suggested by the fifth figure on the left in the third row of the icon of the Sinai fathers (fig. 1). This is a monk with an unusually wide forehead and a narrow lower face, as well as very prominent cheekbones. These features closely resemble the well-known representations of St. John

⁸⁷ On the iconography of Anthony the Great cf. Tomeković, *Les saints ermites*, 24–25.

⁸⁸ On the “portrait” characteristics of St. Ephrem the Syrian cf. Gabelić, *Lesnova*, 126–127; Z. Gavrilović, *St. Ephraim the Syrian’s thought and imagery as an inspiration to Byzantine artists*, Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies 1/2 (1998) 227–230; Tomeković, *Les saints ermites*, 40–41; Hetherington, *The “Painter’s Manual”*, 60 (“an old man, beardless by nature and with sparse hair”).

⁸⁹ On the icon of the Holy Fathers of Sinai, a young monk is shown as the first figure on the left in the first row from the top. We cannot discard the possibility that his position was based on Pseudo-Nilus’s text, which describes how the Saracens singled out and killed a young boy immediately after two older men (cf. Caner, *History and hagiography*, 104–105). On the other hand, Ammonius narrates the story of one of the disciples of monk Adam, of Raithou – a fifteen-year-old boy by the name of Sergios; the barbarians had wanted to take him as a prisoner, but wanting to die with the rest of the monks, the boy grabbed a sword from one of the barbarians and hit him and was slain immediately thereafter (cf. *ibid.*, 165).

⁹⁰ On his iconography cf. Tomeković, *Les saints ermites*, 28; D. Pavlović, *Predstave Aleksija Božijeg čoveka, svetog Jovana Kalivita i svetog Jefrosina Povara u vizantijskom i postvizijskom zidnom slikarstvu*, ZNM 21/2 (2014) 60, 64–65.



Fig. 18. Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, Icon of the holy fathers of Raithou, detail (by permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photograph courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria expeditions to Mount Sinai)

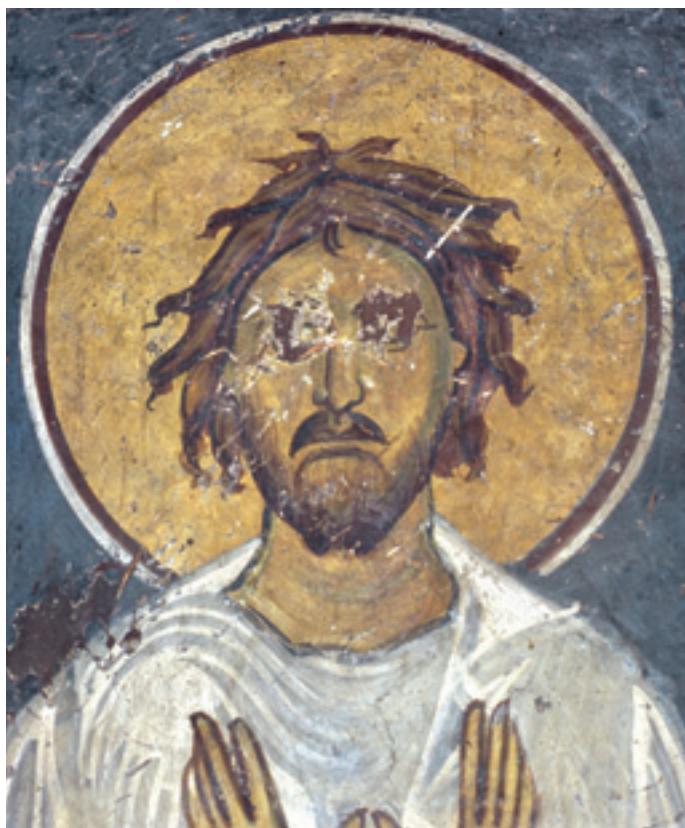


Fig. 19. Kastoria, Panaghia Mavriotissa, St Alexios the Man of God (photo: G. Phousteris)

Chrysostom.⁹¹ Although a bishop, since the middle Byzantine period Chrysostom was traditionally depicted

with a typically ascetic physiognomy and could therefore be used as a template for the “portrait” of one of the martyred monks of Sinai.⁹²

The artist used another characteristic ascetic attribute – short, unruly, disheveled hair – on his depiction of the fourth (young) monk on the right in the third row from the top of the icon of the Sinai fathers (figs. 1, 10b), while the third monk on the left in the bottom row of the icon of the Raithou martyrs has a similar hairstyle (figs. 2, 18). In East Christian iconography, some atypical anchorites such as Nikon the “Metanoeite” were depicted in this manner in Greek churches, particularly in the Peloponnesus,⁹³ and in several Russian monuments.⁹⁴ The same distinctive hairstyle is sometimes – albeit rare-

⁹² For the same reason the image of John Chrysostom was used as the model for the early depictions of St. Francis of Assisi (cf. A. Derbes, A. Neff, *Italy, the mendicant orders, and the Byzantine sphere*, in: *Byzantium. Faith and power*, 452–453).

⁹³ N. B. Δρανδάκης, *Είκονογραφία τοῦ ὄσιον Νίκωνος*, Πελοποννησιακά 5 (1962) 306–319 (= idem, *Μάνη καὶ Λακωνία* 4, ed. X. Κωνσταντινίδη, Αθήνα 2009, 135–158); A. Λαμπροπούλου Η. Αναγνωστάκης Β. Κόντη, A. Πλανοπούλου, *Μνημή καὶ λατρείας των ἁγίων της Πελοποννήσου (9^ο–15^ο αιώνας)*, in: *Heroes of the Orthodox church. The new saints*, 8th–16th c., ed. E. Kountoura-Galake, Athens 2004, 265–292; R. Morris, *The spread of the cult of St. Nikon “Metanoeite”*, in: *Heroes*, 433–456; N. Patterson Ševčenko, *Three saints at Hosios Loukas*, in: *Heroes*, 459–469; Tomeković, *Les saints ermites*, 32–33. According to the Life of Nikon the Metanoeite, an artist had trouble portraying him on an icon based on a description of his appearance, so the saint appeared to him in a dream. Cf. *The life of Saint Nikon*, ed. D. F. Sullivan, Brookline 1987, 151–157; Dagron, *Holy images and likeness*, 23, n. 2.

⁹⁴ V. D. Sarab'ianov, *Programma monasheskikh izobrazhenii v rospisiakh sobora Rozhdestva Bogorodit'si Snetogorskogo monastyr'iā*, in: *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo. Khudozhestvenaiā zhizn' Pskova i iskusstvo*



Fig. 20. Dečani, Sts Cosma and Damian of Arabia (photo: Blago Fund)

ly – seen on representations of Alexios the Man of God, such as that in the Monastery of Panagia Mavriotissa in Kastoria (fig. 19).⁹⁵

It has already been noted that the painter tried to achieve the individuality of some monks' portraits by emphasizing their different geographic and ethnic origin. Two monks are depicted with white headscarves adorned with black ribbons (figs. 1, 14) – an element of the typical Oriental costume.⁹⁶ In Byzantine iconography, it was usually St. John of Damascus who was depicted with this kind of headdress,⁹⁷ as well as some other holy hymnographers⁹⁸ and the holy physicians of Arabia Cosmas and Damian, as evidenced by their excellent “portraits” in the Dečani Monastery (fig. 20).⁹⁹ This iconographic detail is also present in the only extant medieval depiction of the famous hermit Isaac the Syrian – a miniature in the

manuscript of the Bulgarian translation of his writings on asceticism made at the Great Lavra Monastery on Mount Athos in 1398.¹⁰⁰ Finally, in Byzantine art these Oriental headscarves sometimes appear in depictions of Jews and even Pontius Pilate, as evidenced, for example, by the frescos from the cycles of Great Feasts and the Passion Cycle at St. Nicholas' Church in Prilep (1298).¹⁰¹ If we – in contrast with the previous hypothesis about Latros as the icon's place of origin – allow for the possibility that the icon of the Sinai holy fathers was made at the Sinai monastery, then we could also assume that the artist's decision to portray two Easterners could have been inspired by the presence of Syrian or Arab monks at the monastery.¹⁰² Of course, we can do no more today than speculate about this issue.

The possibility of “reconstructing” the process of the iconographic shaping of this extraordinary gallery of faces depicted on the icon of the Sinai fathers is not exhausted with the consideration of the aforementioned

pozdnevizantiiskoi épokhi. K 1100-letiiu Pskova, Moskva 2008, 68–70, ill. 6, 8.

⁹⁵ Tomeković, *Les saints ermites*, 29, fig. 2. On these depictions of Alexios the Man of God cf. Pavlović, *Predstave*, 59, n. 65, who notes that they bear a strong likeness to the images of Nikon the Metanoite.

⁹⁶ Lidov, *Vizantijskie ikony*, 100.

⁹⁷ However, his turban on the icon of the Raithou monks is slightly different.

⁹⁸ G. Babić, *Les moines-poètes dans l'église de la Mère de Dieu à Studenica*, in: *Studenica i vizantijska umetnost oko 1200. godine*, 209–210; A. Nicolaïdes, *L'église de la Panagia Arakiotissa à Lagoudéra, Chypre: Etude iconographique des fresques de 1192*, DOP 50 (1996) 30–35; Tomeković, *Les saints ermites*, 44–45.

⁹⁹ Petković, Bošković, *Manastir Dečani*, T. CLIX; M. Marković, *Pojedinačne predstave svetitelja u naosu i paraklizima*, in: *Zidno slikarstvo manastira Dečana*, 259.

¹⁰⁰ O. S. Popova, *Vizantiskaiā askeza i obrazy iskusstva XIV veka*, in: *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo. Issledovaniā i atributii*, Sankt Peterburg 1997, 96–111, figs. on p. 99, 100; *Mount Athos treasures in Russia*, 175, 177, cat. no. III. 13.

¹⁰¹ Cf. E. Dimitrova, *The painterly assemblage of Saint Nicholas in Prilep and the issue of eesthetical re-branding*, Patrimonium. MK 7/12 (2014) 345–358, esp. figs. 6–10, including a bibliography.

¹⁰² A number of inscriptions in the manuscript indicate that there were indeed some Syrians and Arabs at the monastery, particularly during the thirteenth century. Cf. N. Patterson Ševčenko, *Manuscript production on the mount Sinai from the tenth to thirteenth century* in: *Approaching the Holy mountain*, 245–253. Syrian monks are also mentioned in Thietmar's description (1217). Cf. Mag. Thietmari *Peregrinatio*, 41.



Fig. 21. Studenica, St Sabbas of Jerusalem (photo: author)

templates. However, the remaining observations may seem too speculative and not entirely founded. Be that as it may, we will briefly discuss the sixth figure on the left in the top row and its most distinctive facial characteristic: the unusual beard parted into two strands (figs. 1, 16). Although in this case there are no notable monks whose standardized appearances we could rely on, it should be noted that details often vary in the depictions of some ascetics. For instance, St. Theodosios the Great (the Cenobiarch) was pictured with such a beard in Gračanica and Dečani.¹⁰³

At first glance, the icon depicting the martyrs of Raithou seems to have preserved more original faces. Particularly noteworthy are the two elderly monks with very unusual curly hair in the bottom row, the first with a short beard and the second with a very long white beard (figs. 2, 18). Although we cannot speak of a direct interdependence between them, it should be noted that the hair of the former has been painted similarly to the way that it was depicted in the representations of a rarely depicted anchorite – St. Moses the Black (the Ethiopian). His standing figure in the basilica of St. Nicholas in Manastir (1270/1271) is particularly noteworthy.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ For the Gračanica fresco cf. S. Ćurčić, *Gračanica: king Milutin's church and its place in late Byzantine architecture*, University Park 1979, fig. 88; B. Todić, *Gračanica. Slikarstvo*, Beograd 1999², 110. For the example from Dečani cf. Tomeković, *Le "portrait"*, fig. 23; Todić, Čanak-Medić, *The Dečani monastery*, 427, 500, fig. 418.

¹⁰⁴ D. Koco, P. Miljković-Pepak, *Manastir*, Skopje 1958, 67, sl. 74; P. Kostovska, *Reaching for paradise – the program of the north*

Furthermore, it is evident that two figures on the icon of the Raithou fathers (the first on the left in the second row from the top and the second on the right in the same row, fig. 2) have physiognomies that differ only slightly from that of John Climacus in the upper register.

Another image suggests that the artist used existing physiognomies of saints as templates for his rich portrait gallery of the monks of Raithou. Painting the fifth figure on the left in the top row, below the depiction of the Virgin (figs. 2, 10c, 13), we believe that he used a representation of St. Sabbas the Sanctified, the founder of the famous Lavra Monastery near Jerusalem. Since the Komnenian period, this notable hermit was depicted as a bald old man with a wide, trimmed beard resembling a broom.¹⁰⁵ On this occasion, it will suffice to point out his depictions from Lagoudera, Studenica (fig. 21) and Žiča,¹⁰⁶ as well as two icons from the same Sinai monastery – an unpublished one¹⁰⁷ and another recently published icon (twelfth century), which depicts Sabbas of Jerusalem with St. Nicholas, St. Catherine and St. Irene.¹⁰⁸

Based on the above, it seems that the process of the iconographic shaping of a quite large group of slain monks has been at least partially elucidated. In a number of cases, the artist seems to have used images of saints whose names and representations in works of art were well known in monastic circles. However, this does not mean that the conclusion about the painter's originality is to be relativized or even altered. Despite his use of templates, the richness and appeal of his physiognomies is truly impressive, even more so because he used a relatively small format.¹⁰⁹ We are more inclined to attribute his need to use the physiognomies of famous Orthodox hermits to their wide recognition and extraordinary expressive power. In other words, their distinctive faces simply could not remain unused in the artistic picturing of an "ideal monastic community" on the icons of the martyrs whose cult shone out from the Monastery of Saint Catherine.

aisle of the church of St. Nicholas in manastir Mariovo, KN 28–29 (2002–2003) 70–71, fig. 3. For an extensive study of the cult and iconography of St. Moses the Ethiopian cf. T. Starodubcev, *St. Moses the Ethiopian or the Black. Cult and representation in the middle ages*, Zografski 43 (2019) 1–22.

¹⁰⁵ On the iconographic characteristics of Sabbas of Jerusalem cf. Tomeković, *Les saints ermites*, 23–24; D. Vojvodić, *Putevi i faze uobličavanja srednjovekovne ikonografije svetog Save Srpskog*, Niš i Vizantija 13 (2015) 51–53.

¹⁰⁶ D. Winfield, J. Winfield, *The church of the Panaghia tou Arakos at Lagoudhera, Cyprus. The paintings and their painterly significance*, Washington D.C. 2003, 170–171, figs. 110, 112; M. Živković, *St Sabbas the Sanctified*, in: *Spiritual and Cultural Heritage of the Monastery of Studenica: Past, Perseverance, Contemporaneity*, ed. M. Marković, Belgrade 2019, 62, cat. no. 22; M. Čanak-Medić, D. Popović, D. Vojvodić, *Manastir Žiča*, Beograd 2014, 324, sl. 229 (D. Vojvodić).

¹⁰⁷ A photograph of this icon is available on the Princeton University webpage about the Sinai icons: <http://vrc.princeton.edu/sinai/items/show/6135>.

¹⁰⁸ *Holy image, hallowed ground*, 263, no. 54.

¹⁰⁹ The icon of the Holy Fathers of Sinai measures 57.2 × 42.5 cm; the icon of the Holy Fathers of Raithou measures 58.2 × 40.8 cm, cf. n. 1. supra.

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О иконама синајских и рантских мученика у манастиру Свете Катарине на Синају, са освртом на култ и иконографију тих светитеља у источнохришћанској уметности

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У манастиру Свете Катарине на Синају чувају се две иконе с представама четрдесет синајских и четрдесет рантских отаца, чији настанак истраживачи углавном смештају у почетак XIII века. Реч је о локалним светитељима пострадалим у нападима Сарацена и Влемија, становника пустиње између Нила и Црвеног мора, у Горњем Египту.

О страдању поменутих мученика сачувано је неколико писаних сведочанстава. Прва два текста, чији су аутори монах Амоније (BHG, 1300) и Псеудо-Нил (BHG, 1301–1307), сигурно су најранији хагиографски састави о овим светитељима, али се њихов настанак не може прецизно временски одредити, већ се широко датују у раздобље између IV и VI столећа. На основу Псеудо-Ниловог текста састављено је у XI веку кратко житије синајских и рантских монаха, сачувано у тзв. Царском менолођу за јануар, који се данас налази у збирци рукописа Уметничког музеја Волтерс у Балтимору (No. 521). Белешка о њиховом страдању постоји и у рубрици за 14. јануар Синаксара Цариградске цркве. У последњем поменутом рукопису наведено је и то да се мошти синајских и рантских мученика чувају у цркви Светог Павла у Орфанотрофону. С друге стране, о штовању њихових реликвија у Синајском

манастиру – чуваних у капели у југоисточном делу католикона, јужно од олтара – сведоче многобројни писани извори. Они у ранијим истраживањима нису били довољно искоришћени, због чега су се у науци јављале извесне сумње у постојање моштију у манастиру Свете Катарине. Стога је поменутим писаним сведочанствима у раду посвећена посебна пажња. Испоставило се да је најранији помен моштију синајских и рантских отаца сачуван у *Τιτικυ μαναστηρα Σενίτε Κατηρίνη*, у којем је наведено да се оне налазе у „Претечиној цркви“, како је тада називан поменути параклис. О моштима се потом говори и у низу путописних списка грчких и руских ходочасника, од којих се најстарији може широко датовати у време између 1250. и 1350. године. У последњем тексту те врсте којем је посвећена пажња у нашем раду – стихованом опису из пера Пајсија Агијапостолита, потоњег митрополита Родоса (1597–1603), написаном 1577–1592. године – поменуте су, уз мошти мученика и мермерни натпис о њиховом страдању, и две иконе с њиховим представама. По свему судећи, реч је о првом помену икона које су главни предмет нашег истраживања.

Уз изворе што говоре о постојању посебне капеле у којој су се налазиле мошти ових мученика

у Синајском манастиру, односно податке о штовању њихових реликвија у Цариграду, особено сведочанство о трајању и распострањености култа синајских и рaitских отаца јесу њихове ликовне представе. Реч је, додуше, готово искључиво о празничним илустрацијама у оквиру календара сликаних у рукописима и на зидовима храмова, али њихова бројност и хронолошки распон упечатљиво говоре о размерама култа ових светих. Поред менолошких представа, сачувана је и једна руска икона с приказом синајских и рaitских отаца. То је остварење мајстора Первуше, припадника тзв. строгановске сликарске школе, из XVII столећа.

У другом делу рада детаљније су размотрене извесне иконографске занимљивости икона синајских и рaitских мученика из манастира Свете Катарине. Пажња је најпре усмерена на фигуре у горњим зонама. У највишем делу иконе синајских отаца насликана је композиција Деизиса, са чијих су страна фигуре светог Петра и Павла Латроског (лево) и светог Павла и светог Јована Лествичника (десно). На истом месту на икони рaitских отаца налази се представа Богородице са Христом, којој се клањају арханђели, а са страна су насликани свети Јован Лествичник и свети Јован Дамаскин. Међу свим набројаним представама посебно објашњење захтева једино фигура светог Павла, утемељитеља славне монашке заједнице на Латросу. Реч је о једној од малобројних сачуваних средњовековних представа поменутог светитеља.

Појава његовог лица на икони синајских отаца могла би се објаснити у светлу података из житија тог светог, по којима су бројни синајски и рaitски оци, бежећи од Сарацена, пронашли уточиште управо на Латросу. Уз то, појава фигуре светог Павла Латроског на икони синајских отаца отвара простор за претпоставку да је њен аутор био с Латроса или да је икона на Синај послата из поменуте малоазијске монашке заједнице.

Посебну пажњу на иконама синајских и рaitских отаца привлачи, најзад, и богатство њихових физиономија. Пажљивијим посматрањем открива се да су код поједињих ликова сликари користили постојеће и препознатљиве „портретске особености“, то јест да су као предлошке употребили представе славних светих монаха, па, чини се, и представе личности из других светитељских категорија. У покушају да остваре што веће богатство физиономија осамдесеторице синајских и рaitских мученика, аутори разматраних икона насликали су тако неколико ликова сагласно типолошким обрасцима коришћеним за представе светих Јевтимија Великог, Антонија Великог, Саве Јерусалимског, Јефрема Сирине, Јована Каливита, Јована Златоустог, Никона Метаноита и других. У поједињим случајевима сличност је изражена у толикој мери да би се, хипотетички, да су ликови са синајских икона очувани у виду самосталних представа, лако могло десити да буду идентификовани као неки од поменутих знаменитих светитеља.

